

# About Anacortes

Anacortes, WA

Anacortes is the hometown you wished you had grown up in. If you weren't lucky enough to have been born here, you can do the next best thing and visit.

Feel what a small, friendly town used to be like by strolling the "Old Town" area of Anacortes with its galleries, unique shops, nautical stores, coffee houses and restaurants.

You'll see the "old-timers" most weekday mornings at a table with coffee cup in hand at Fidalgo Bay Roasting Company. Eavesdropping is free and a good way to learn what's on the locals' minds.

Even though Anacortes has grown, life is still gentler here. The local library doesn't fine for late books. They have a "conscience box." More often than not, people will smile and say "hello" when passing on the sidewalk.

More than 70 life-sized murals dot the town, depicting townspeople from days gone by. Victorian houses and tree-lined streets fan out from the center of town and include a Carnegie Library turned town museum and an old train depot turned art gallery.

Two whale watching excursions leave daily from the Cap Sante Boat Haven, with tours narrated by marine naturalists.

Kayaking rentals, tours and instruction are available at a marina-side location .

For those who like to be captains of their own destiny, several yacht charter companies rent a variety of power and sailboats.

With six freshwater lakes on Fidalgo Island, fishermen can try their hand at catching trout and bass. (Pass Lake near Deception Pass is a special draw for trout fishermen.)

Saltwater fishing expeditions are available

through several fishing charter companies.

Bicycle enthusiasts of all ages and aptitudes can rent bikes and tour the stunning outer and inner roads of Fidalgo Island.

With trails through 2,200 acres of community forestland, hikers always have new paths to explore. A "top-of-the-island-view" from Mt. Erie includes the San Juan Islands, Olympic Mountains, and the Cascade Range.

Couples can explore romantic beaches along Washington Park, Bowman's Bay, and Deception Pass State Park before retiring to one of the dozens of B&B's and small inns around the island. Several campsites and RV campgrounds are available for those who desire a nature experience.

One of the best ways to tour the San Juan Islands is to walk aboard a ferry heading to Orcas, Lopez, Shaw or San Juan Island for an up-close look at the islands' coastline and scenic vistas of the Olympics and Cascades. Locals and tourists alike find it an inexpensive way to see the islands while relaxing, reading, and enjoying a picnic lunch or dinner.

For those who like to pack a lot into their weekend, why not try a "Two-Nation Vacation" weekend? Spend a night in Anacortes followed by the scenic waterway ferry ride to Sidney, B.C. on Vancouver Island. From there it is only a short drive or bus ride to Victoria. The Anacortes ferry terminal carries both passengers and cars year round to Vancouver Island on a reservation basis. Passing through the San Juan Islands, is by far the most scenic way to Vancouver Island.



# Activities

Anacortes, WA

## Beach-exploring

Fidalgo Island's beaches range from sandy alcoves to pebbly stretches. Some of the more popular beaches:

Rosario Beach

Bowman's Bay

Guemes Channel

Sunset Beach at Washington Park



## Boating

Anacortes is a waterfront town as evidenced by five marinas. It has the largest collection of bare boat charters in North America.



Visitors can rent power boats, sailboats,—even kayaks. There are also fishing, touring, and whale watching charters.

Shipbuilding is alive and well in Anacortes. At the shipyards near the north end of town near the Port of Anacortes, big boats including ferry boats, are being built.

## Whale Watching

Anacortes is an exceptional place to watch Orca whales.

Three pods of 90 whales travel in our waters, often going by Guemes Channel.

Whale watching tours are offered every day during the peak months of May through September at Cap Sante Boat Haven. In addition to whales, you'll find seals, dolphins, otters, and a variety of birds.



## Kayaking

Anacortes is a kayaker's paradise. There are companies which rent kayaks, provide lessons, and even conducts tours. During the Waterfront Festival in May, the most spectacular kayak race



in the U.S. takes place as competitors leave on a two-day, 40-mile kayak race to Orcas Island and back.

## Bicycling

Fidalgo Island has 30 miles of mountain biking trails through the community forestlands, plus many more miles of scenic backroads. Whatever your speed, you just can't beat



Fidalgo Island for scenic, challenging rides.

Bicycle rentals, repair and trail maps are available at several places in town.

## Ferry Riding

Want to know a secret? One of the favorite activities of locals is to take a relaxing walk-on cruise of the San Juan Islands. Several times a day ferries go to Orcas, Lopez, Shaw and Friday Harbor on San Juan Island. And passengers only pay once during the entire trip. While many decide to explore islands for several hours before taking the ferry back, others bring a picnic lunch or buy dinner onboard and watch the best part of the world go by. (See enclosed ferry article.)

Thousands of visitors take the international ferry run out of Anacortes to Vancouver Island (via the city of Sidney, near Victoria).

## Birdwatching

Eagles, ospreys, herons, and a multitude of other birds call

Fidalgo Island home. Flocks of migratory birds such as Trumpeter swans and Canadian geese stop in and near the Padilla Bay Estuary on their journeys. Birdwatchers enjoy sighting birds throughout the island, especially along the shores of the six freshwater lakes on the island.



## Camping

Washington Park and Deception Pass State Park draw thousands of campers a year. Several well-equipped R.V. parks are also located on Fidalgo Island, drawing tourists back again and again.

## Eco-touring

This activity has become increasingly popular in recent years as people

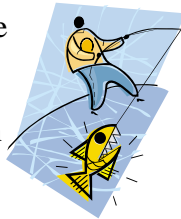


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seek to understand the interdependence of ecological systems. With an abundance of forests and beaches, naturalists are on hand to provide guided tours of the Anacortes Forest Lands, teaching people about edible plants, tide pools and wildlife.

## Fishing

Although Anacortes is a great place to embark on a saltwater fishing adventure for salmon, halibut, ling cod, red snapper and rock cod, on any given day you'll find a few dozen fishermen angling for trout and bass on the island's six lakes. Pass Lake near Deception Pass Bridge is a favorite fly fishing spot.



## Hiking

With 2,200 acres of community forest lands, plus two state parks, Fidalgo Island is a place where you never have to cover the same ground twice. There is a top-of-the-world view of San Juan Islands and the Olympic and Cascade mountains from the summit of Mt. Erie. The Loop Road of Washington Park is also a favorite walk of locals and visitors alike.



## History

No need for a time machine to step back into Anacortes' past, just stroll the streets of "Old Town" and the surrounding Victorian and cottage-lined residential streets. The area's history is on display at the Anacortes Museum (a former Carnegie library). The old train depot is now an art gallery. And the sternwheel snagboat next door, *The W.T. Preston*, has quite a history to share with visitors.

## Scuba Diving

Sure the water's cold, but with a wetsuit on you won't even notice. You'll be too enchanted with the variety of marine life in what ranks as one of the top diving areas in the country. The local dive shop can tell you all about the hottest spots to dive.



## Shopping

Whether rain or shine, you'll always find that unique, just-right-something for your home, a loved one or friend in the many shops and galleries in Anacortes. And on Saturday mornings late spring through summer, check out the Farmer's Market handmade items.

## Regional pursuits:

**Eagle watching** (There is an annual Rockport Eagle Festival in late January/early February in this mountain town not far from Anacortes. From December through February, tourists can watch the birds feast on spawned salmon along the banks of the upper Skagit River.)

**Mountain climbing** Mt. Erie offers some rock climbing, but for serious rockhounds, Mt. Baker, Mt. Shuksan and the whole Cascade range are within a couple hours' drive.

**Snow skiing/boarding** You can be sea-to-ski within a few hour's drive to Mt. Baker or Steven's Pass. Ask the local teens their favorite runs.

**Tulip trekking** If you haven't seen the Skagit Valley ablaze first with daffodils, then tulips in early spring, then you've missed the ultimate Kodak moment. Don't worry, you can be here next year. And why not stay in our pretty water-front town?

**River Rafting** Whitewater enthusiasts as well as less-adventuresome tourists can enjoy a guided raft trip down the nearby Nooksack and Skagit Rivers.

# *Festivals/ Events*

*Anacortes, WA*

## **Anacortes Festivals:**

### **2nd weekend in May Anacortes Waterfront Festival**

Mix fun, food, shopping and boats together, then add a dash of classic cars, kayaks, model boats and a real cannon-- and you get the Anacortes Waterfront Festival.

This annual event draws about 30,000 people over three days.

Nearly 50 kayakers will set out on a two-day kayak race from Anacortes to Orcas Island and back as during the San Juan Challenge Kayak Race. Billed as "the most spectacular kayak race in the U.S." the course follows the scenic waters of the Cascadia Marine Water Trail. The race includes a 4-mile open crossing of Rosario Strait, as well as challenging currents and tide rips in Obstruction Pass, Bellingham Channel, and Guemes Channel, plus rocky shores along Guemes, Cypress, and Orcas Islands.

### **1st weekend in August Anacortes Arts Festival**

Art lovers -- some 80,000 of them -- are drawn to this showcase for the arts in Anacortes. A juried and invitational art show display the creative genius of some of the best the Pacific Northwest has to offer. More than 250 booths displaying the talents of artists, artisans and craftspeople offer excellent buys that are truly unique.

This is a family event with activities for children, entertainment and great food. A vintage car show and street entertainers add to the excitement.

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## Anacortes Special Events:

The **4th of July** just wouldn't be the 4th without a hometown parade, and Anacortes has one of the best. It may not be large, but it is heartfelt. Enjoy a lazy summer day at one of our beaches or family activities in Causland Memorial Park, then when it's dark, grab a blanket and head down to Cap Sante Boat Haven for fireworks over the water. Memories linger long after the fireworks fade.

Later in July, bargain hunters have a field day when the city's largest rummage sale, **Shipwreck Day**, takes over downtown. Thousands of people, some from several states away, come looking for bargains. This is a great event for true local flavor as town neighbors greet neighbors.

Headin' down the highway? Well, if you're on a Harley (or other motorcycle), head to Anacortes for the annual **Oyster Run in late September**. Nearly 6,000 motorcycles line the town's main street, Commercial Avenue as bikers and riders have a good time at this unusual event. Motorcycle stunt teams, food and live music make the day fun for everyone.

Looking for something to do for the **holidays**? Experience small-town charm on a more intimate level after the summer crowds are gone.

The warmth of our townspeople will keep your spirit toasty, even when there's a nip in the air. Shopping is great, soups on in the local restaurants, and the B&B's and inns offer quiet comfort.

Plan your stay right, and you'll be able to take part in an **Art Walk weekend** when local merchants display the creative efforts of local artists in their stores throughout the town.

A **Holiday Boat Parade and Regatta, community tree lighting and caroling**, are part of December's activities. And there's always a fine offering by the Anacortes Community Theater.

Feel like a jaunt: take the Anacortes-Sidney ferry to see **Butchart Gardens** decorated for the holiday season as a **Dickensian wonderland**.



## Area Festivals:

March/April

### Skagit Valley Tulip Festival

Here's your chance to tiptoe through the tulips -- thousands and thousands of them in every color and type. Check out their web site at <http://www.tulipfestival.org/>. Plan to attend the festival May 31-April 16 in the year 2000.

Late June/early July

### Loggerodeo

Woodchips fly in the nearby quaint, historic town of Sedro-Woolley during this rodeo for lumberjacks and woodcarvers. This festival draws some of the best competitors in the west.

July

### San Juan Jazz Festival

Feast your eyes on island beauty while indulging your ears with great jazz talent in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island.

December

### Christmas Lights Tour,

Add an international flavor to the winter holidays by seeing the lights in Victoria, BC the whole month of December.

# History

*Anacortes, WA*

People have lived on Fidalgo Island and the area for more than 10,000 years. Blessed by a moderate climate, plentiful seafood and game, native Americans of the Samish clan enjoyed unspoiled, scenic surroundings. Many area indigenous peoples moved to the Swinomish Indian Reservation, established in 1873.



*Anacortes in its early infancy of the 1850s.*

In 1791, Spanish explorers Narvarez, Carrasco and Galiano discovered the islands and bestowed them with Spanish names such as Fidalgo, Guemes, Lopez and San Juan, and the Strait of San Juan de Fuca.

Captain Joseph Whidbey of the Vancouver Expedition came to the area a year later, discovering Deception Pass and his namesake, Whidbey Island.

Trappers and traders for the Hudson Bay Company soon followed, depleting the fur bearing animal population. Then came the early settlers in the 1850s who desired a place to homestead and make a living off the land and sea. They settled near current Ship Harbor

In the 1870s, Amos Bowman, a mapmaker and geologist, purchased 168 acres of land and built a home, general store, and a wharf. This early town founder also became postmaster and honored his wife, Anna “Annie” Curtis Bowman, by naming the town after her, with a slight bow to the existing Spanish flavor of the island’s names.

Hence, Anacortes became the official name for the town which previously had been known as Squaw Harbor, Ship Harbor, and Magic City.

Anacortes went through a boom of sorts with the population of 200 swelling to 2,000 almost overnight upon speculation that it would be the western terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railroad. When this didn’t happen, the town went through a depression and many people left.

Rich in marine life, salmon and codfish canneries sprang up, employing hundreds of people from the early 1890s until the 1950s. Anacortes is still home to several salmon and other fish processing plants, and commercial fisherman head out to deep waters looking for fish. Remnants of the old piers can be seen several places along the coastline.

Timber was another draw for men looking for work. Anacortes had four shingle mills and three sawmills shortly after the turn of the century. Fueled by abundant old growth timber easily transported via tugboat or milled right in Anacortes, remnants of these cedar giants can still be seen in Washington Park, surrounded by tall second-growth forest.

Other businesses in Anacortes included a brick factory, glass factory, boat building, and a laundry. When one industry depleted natural resources or demand fell, another stepped in to take its place. In the 1950s, Shell and Texaco built refineries at March Point, which are still major employers today under the new management.

Today, Anacortes retains a strong connection to its shipbuilding and fishing past. Its “old town” section features unique shops and restaurants on a tree-lined street. It has increasingly become a haven for artists and artisans, and attracts a growing number of tourists and retirees desiring a taste of home-town life on an island paradise without the hassle of daily ferry commute.

# Location

Anacortes is an island paradise accessible by two bridges. Located on Fidalgo Island, the town is 80 miles north of Seattle and 90 miles south of Vancouver, B.C.

From Seattle, take the I-5 Freeway north to beautiful Skagit Valley. Take exit 230 (Highway 20) and follow the signs to Anacortes about 15 miles.

From the city of Vancouver in Canada, take I-5 south then exit at Highway 20 west and follow the signs to Anacortes.

**Amtrak Rail Service** is available once daily from Seattle to Mount Vernon on its commuter run to Vancouver.

**Skagit Transit**, (360-293-2424), provides free public transportation throughout the county.

**Airporter Shuttle**, (1-800-BELLAIR for WA, AK, B.C) or (1-800-423-4219 for other states and provinces), provides scheduled daily service between Whatcom, Skagit, Island, North Snohomish Counties and SeaTac Airport and Bellingham Airport.

**West Isle Air**, (360-293-4691), provides affordable, convenient and scenic air transportation to and from the Anacortes Airport, where private pilots may also land.

**Washington State Ferries** with service to and from Anacortes to Sidney, B.C. and the WA islands of San Juan, Lopez, Orcas and Shaw. For information, visit Washington State Ferries (<http://wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/>) or call (206) 464-6400; in WA (888) 808-7977.

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# Ferry service to...

**Anacortes is the eastern terminus for the scenic Washington State Ferries routes to:**

## **Victoria, B.C. via Sidney, B.C.**

Reservations required.

Car and passenger ferry year round.

Time: 3 hours and 15 minutes.

*Photo opportunities:* City and island life, First Nations totems, historic towns, marine wildlife

Two ferries depart Anacortes for Sidney, B.C. on Vancouver Island each day in the summer. Charming shops, galleries and numerous bookstores line the picturesque seaside town of Sidney, which is a short distance from Victoria.

The city of Victoria is a world class city with European charm and Canadian hospitality. The world-famous Butchart Gardens draw visitors year round. The Royal British Columbia Museum has extensive collections of First Nations art and artifacts, plus special exhibits. Visitors enjoy unique shops, strolls along the inner harbour waterfront, and places such as the Empress Hotel, for tea.

## **Friday Harbor, San Juan Island**

Car and passenger ferry year round.

Time: from Orcas Island: 45 minutes

*Photo opportunities:* harbor boats & yachts, whales, beaches, forests, vacation homes, nature

San Juan is the most populated island and also the busiest. A favorite tourist stop, the quaint town of Friday Harbor bustles with restaurants, shops, lodging, and activities such as kayaking, whale watching, boating, golf, fishing, a whale museum.

## **Orcas Island**

Car and passenger ferry year round.

Time: from Shaw Island: 10 minutes

*Photo opportunities:* Scenic mountain views, beaches, whales, forests, farms, artists and artisans, ferry

Orcas Island is the largest of the San Juan Islands,



with 57 square miles of mountain and ocean views with 125 miles of shoreline. As its name implies, it is a favorite habitat or Orca “killer” whales.

Mt. Constitution, at 2,904 feet, offers a breathtaking 360° view of the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges, Canada and the San Juan Islands. There are accommodations, shops, restaurants and activities for residents and tourists.

## **Lopez Island**

Car and passenger ferry, year round.

Time: from Anacortes: 45 minutes

*Photo opportunities:* farmlands, beaches, fishing village, vineyards, town village, ferry

Lopez Island is the first ferry stop on the Anacortes to Lopez, Shaw and Orcas Islands run. This tranquil island, (population 1,800 of year round residents) is a favorite for bicyclists, due to its gently rolling terrain and scenic farmlands of dairy cows, sheep, vineyards, orchards and a kiwi farm.

Lopez Village is the center of activity on the island, at the northern end of Fisherman Bay.

Spencer Spit is a 129-acre waterfront park with great beachwalking opportunities.

Residents are known for their friendly waves to passerby.

## **Shaw Island**

Car and passenger ferry year round.

Time: from Lopez Island: 15 minutes

*Photo opportunities:* Forests, beaches, ferry

Shaw Island is the smallest of the four San Juan Islands which have ferry service. Fewer than 150 people live on the island's 5,000 acres year-round. There are no tourist accommodations, however there is a small country store.



# Climate

Anacortes, WA

Anacortes has a milder, drier climate than many other places in western Washington. It has a yearly average rainfall of only 26 inches, compared with 38 inches for Seattle.

The mild maritime climate has a lowest average temperature of 38 degrees Fahrenheit in January and an average high temperature of 74 degree Fahrenheit in August.



# Accommodations

Whether a person is looking for accommodations in a cozy bed and breakfast, a scenic country inn, or a larger motel/hotel, Fidalgo Island has it all.

There are more than 11 B&B's and Inns, 15 hotels/motels, and five RV and camping sites.

Many Seattle area residents come to Anacortes year round for a weekend getaway, and to partake of the town's unique shopping opportunities, natural surroundings and fun festivals.



# Dining

Hungry? How about a gourmet Northwest salmon dinner? Maybe one of those popular vegetarian wraps? Something exotic perhaps: Parisian, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Italian? A meal made from scratch? Or just some good fast food? Well, Anacortes has food for just about every taste and budget.

The town boasts 21 restaurants, three bakeries, nearly a dozen places for espresso drinks, a coffee roaster, several pubs and a microbrewery, and a half dozen caterers.

